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ABSTRACT

The Writing Skills Committee of the New Jersey Department of Education determined that the Eleventh-Grade High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) writing test should be based on contemporary discourse theory that is process oriented and is firmly rooted in real world application of students' skill and knowledge as writers. The committee identified two skill clusters that require students to demonstrate competency as writers: (1) constructing meaning by writing an essay; and (2) reconstructing meaning by revising and editing the written text of another writer. During the 1989-90 school year, reading, mathematics, and writing committees will develop sample test items and specifications. Three years of "due notice" testing will begin in 1990-91, and the first test required for graduation will be administered in December 1993. (Thirty-four references and appendixes containing lists of the members of the writing skills committee and of reviewers of the proposed writing skills are attached.) (RS)

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Report of the Eleventh-grade High School Proficiency Test Writing Skills Development Committee

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CS212190

REPORT OF THE

ELEVENTH-GRADE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST

WRITING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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June, 1989

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FOREWORD

Raising the level of academic achievement of all students in New Jersey has been a major goal of this administration since 1982. As part of that effort, we have moved from the low expectations of the Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) program to the more rigorous demands of the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT).

Recent history in New Jersey and the nation indicates that the expectations created by a statewide high school graduation test can positively influence the level of achievement of all students, whether from urban, suburban, or rural school districts. In addition, national reports stress the need for workers with increased skill levels in the twenty-first century. For this reason, a Department of Education panel was appointed in 1987 to study the feasibility and efficacy of moving the New Jersey high school graduation test from its current grade nine administration to a grade closer to graduation. At the conclusion of its study, the panel recommended that the administration of the graduation test be moved from the ninth grade to the eleventh grade. This change is part of the response to the increased skill demands of students, including the assessment of higher order skills measuring students' abilities to think critically, solve problems, reason, and make decisions.

During the fall and winter of the 1988-89 school year, reading, mathematics, and writing committees met to identify the skills that high school students will need to function politically, economically, and socially in our increasingly complex technological society. The committees were made up of educators (elementary, secondary, and postsecondary), parents, students, and representatives of our state's business community. Each committee's specific charge was to identify skills to be assessed on the eleventh-grade HSPT. The ninth-grade HSPT was the starting point of the skill identification process. The skills identified by the committees have incorporated and expanded upon the ninth-grade skills to emphasize thinking, problem solving, reasoning, and decision making appropriate for eleventh graders.

The skills were circulated to all public school districts in the state, as well as to business, parent, student, and educational organizations, for review and comment. Those who responded to the survey indicated support for the committees' work and reinforced the belief that these are the basic skills our graduates will need for employment and continuing education as we move toward the twenty-first century. Responses to the writing skills, for example, indicated that the proposed essay specifications are consistent with the outcomes of a quality writing program. In addition, they concurred with the format and necessity for assessing the skills identified in the multiple-choice component of the test. (See Appendix A for a listing of reviewers and respondents.)

The review process also provided direction for the clarification, modification, or deletion of particular skills and/or clusters. In writing, however, there was broad consensus that the proposed skills identified by the writing committee not be changed.

During the 1989-90 school year, reading, mathematics, and writing committees comprised of school educators will develop sample test items and specifications. These test development committees will have available to them both the reviewers' comments about the skills and their suggestions about item specifications. In 1990-91, the department will begin three years of "due notice" testing. The first test required for graduation will be administered in December, 1993. Throughout the due notice period, the department will conduct awareness sessions and expanded HSPT institutes to acquaint teachers and administrators with the new skills and strategies for incorporating them in the curriculum.

I commend the members of the committees for their hard work and effort in developing the eleventh-grade skills. I am grateful to the educators, business people, parents, and students in this state who responded to our call to review the skills.

Saul Cooperman
Commissioner

REPORT OF THE
ELEVENTH-GRADE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST
WRITING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Background

The Eleventh-grade Writing Skills Committee was charged with the task of identifying the skills students would need to successfully function in the workplace and society of the twenty-first century. These skills were also considered instructionally relevant to quality programs in secondary education. The list of skills for the eleventh-grade writing HSPT was drafted from a variety of sources. In addition to the knowledge and expertise of the members of the writing skills committee (Appendix B), other sources were invaluable to the committee:

- consultants Dr. Charles Cooper and Dr. Arthur Whimbey. Dr. Charles Cooper is a recognized authority in the field of process writing and writing assessment. He is a consultant to the New Jersey and California State Department of Education's assessment programs. Dr. Arthur Whimbey is a cognitive psychologist recognized for his work in metacognition, reasoning, and the performance levels and cognitive strategies of students in the academic skill areas.

- current assessment publications from California, Michigan, Illinois, and Educational Testing Service in Princeton (Appendix C);

- research and theoretical models of James Britton, Frank D'Angelo, James Moffett, James Kinneavy, Charles Cooper, and Arthur Whimbey, to name a few (Appendix C);

- recommendations of the members of the current ninth-grade writing HSPT test development committee.

Introduction

Attached are the skills identified by the Eleventh-grade HSPT Writing Skills Committee. Relying on their own professional expertise and the above sources, the committee members determined that the eleventh-grade writing test should be based on contemporary discourse theory (Britton, et al., 1975; D'Angelo, 1975, 1980; Kinneavy, 1971; Moffett, 1981) that is process based and is firmly rooted in real world application of students' skill and knowledge as writers. Thus, the committee identified two skill clusters that require students to demonstrate competency as writers. These clusters are: 1) Constructing Meaning by Writing an Essay; 2) Reconstructing Meaning by Revising and Editing the Written Text of Another Writer.

There are similarities and differences between the ninth- and eleventh-grade writing skills. The differences are explained by theory and the writer's role as an active constructor of meaning, that is, the writer creates meaning by arranging/rearranging ideas for the purpose of communication. The proposed skills are rooted in the ninth-grade HSPT and are expanded to be

more appropriate for an eleventh-grade test. A comparison and contrast of these essay and multiple-choice clusters/skills follow.

The Essay: A Comparison and Contrast of Ninth-Versus Eleventh-Grade Direct Writing Assessment

As currently recognized with the ninth-grade HSPT, students should be able to compose an essay. The term "essay" is used generically to represent a wide range of writing assignments. Eleventh-graders, however, will move from the ninth- grade subjective, personal response (e.g., Think about something that you did not expect. Write an essay...) to a more objective, impersonal response assuming a more remote audience on the eleventh-grade test (e.g., You have been selected to write an article for a teen magazine about an issue of importance to eleventh-grade students...). Although a wide range of writing assignments from New Jersey's best writing programs were considered for assessment (e.g., autobigraphical, observations, report of information...), the committee considered only those they felt tapped public need and the cognitive demands of a critical, intelligent society in the 21st century. Since much writing for the public is intended to prove a point or support a stance, position, or decision, the committee felt that a writer who could write a convincing essay would best meet these needs. Writers who are convincing would be competent writers because they would be able to compose a reasonable response, each point supported by evidence the reader will accept because the evidence is focused on the author's stated position or controlling idea. The two basic processes -- thinking and organizing -- are integral to logical reasoning and to the success of the writer. Since the committee also wanted to ensure a robust writing curriculum they agreed upon three fundamental purposes and audiences for assessing writing on the eleventh-grade test. For example, the issues that the writing situation asks students to write about may be derived from any one of the following audience relationships:

- interpersonal,
- school, or
- community/larger society.

In addition, students will be required to focus on the purpose for writing by taking a position or writing a point of view essay that justifies an opinion, problem, or speculation. In other words, students will be able to respond to the question "Why Am I Writing?" by either:

- proposing a solution to a problem,
- addressing a controversial issue, or
- speculating about causes or effects of events/trends/phenomena.

Of course, the writing situation and directions would be related to adolescent issues and the age and ability of grade 11 students.

Taking a position on an issue, proposing a solution to a problem, or speculating about causes or effects will cause the writer to rely on knowledge, personal experience, or learning for support; to demonstrate awareness of other points of view; and to employ diverse writing strategies to justify a stated premise or point of view. Student writing strategies may include effective sequences, anecdotes, causes and effects, comparisons and

contrasts, factual support or statistical evidence, and explanations of key terms. The ability to convince others is a form of power. Such writing is based on the writer's purposes, the aims of the writer, the ends of his or her composing. Presenting a solution to a problem, a cause and ensuing effect, or one side of a controversy so effectively that the writer wins an audience over to his/her way of thinking, or encourages that audience to take action, makes the writer a leader and a guide for others.

Thus, as with the ninth-grade HSPT, the eleventh-grade HSPT will ask students to construct meaning, to write an essay. What is different is the students' response to a more remote audience (personal/interpersonal, peer/school, or community/larger society) as well as the higher level cognitive response that is dependent upon students knowing why they are writing (proposing a solution to a problem, addressing a controversial issue, speculating about causes or effects of events/trends/phenomena). Students who exhibit written competency on the eleventh-grade HSPT will write convincingly by taking a position and will support the position, speculation, or proposed solution by using knowledge attained through personal experience or learning (literature and/or history, math, science, etc.). Students who competently write a convincing essay will compose a sustained, integrated piece of written discourse that conveys a message through language, syntax, and content that is appropriate for the topic, audience, and purpose intended.

Revising and Editing: A Comparison and Contrast of Indirect (Multiple Choice) Writing Assessment

The second component of the eleventh-grade writing HSPT focuses on the role of the writer as a critical reader of the written text of another writer. As a critical reader, the student attempts to reconstruct the meaning of the other writer and responds to multiple-choice items that focus on the content, clarity, and technical correctness of the written text. In contrast, on the ninth-grade HSPT, students respond to discrete skills based on sentences and short paragraphs. (Isolated sentences do not readily transfer revising/editing skills to student's own writing.) On the eleventh-grade test, the student reads a hypothetical student's written draft with a critical eye and relates content and organization, usage, sentence construction, and mechanics of standard written English to the topic, audience, and purpose intended. As a critical reader, the student identifies what is or is not working in another's writing. This role embodies the abstraction called "audience." In this role, the student reads with a critical eye. The responses the student will be asked to make in this multiple-choice component indicate the student's awareness and reaction to the other writer's ability to construct meaning, exhibit clarity of thought, and demonstrate technical correctness.

It is this skill to read critically, revise, and edit sustained written text that leads writers to become more critical readers of their own written work and attentive to the decisions writers make, the way a thoughtful reader reads, and the revising/editing task as an opportunity for improving written communication. The person who reads with a critical eye to revise and edit another writer's text does so with the intent of offering advice, that is, to point out what is or is not working, to make suggestions, or to ask questions in preparation for a possible meeting with the author of the draft. Rewriting, however, is left to the author of the draft, the other writer.

THE ELEVENTH-GRADE PROPOSED WRITING SKILLS

Presented below is the final list of writing skills and skill descriptions.

I. Cluster: Constructing Meaning By Writing An Essay

A. Skill: Planning/Prewriting An Essay

B. Skill: Composing An Essay

C. Skill: Revising/Editing An Essay

- Students should be able to exhibit written competency by producing a sustained, integrated piece of written discourse that conveys a message that is appropriate for the topic, audience, and purpose intended.

- This competency requires students to apply tactics of logical reasoning, knowledge attained through personal experience or learning (literature and/or history, math, science, etc.), and the strategies which control the successful construction of meaning during composing. The directions for writing the essay will specify requirements and features of the essay and provide a purpose for writing. Students will be asked to write in an uninterrupted testing period (possibly 50-to-60 minutes), one prompt based upon any <u>one</u> of the writing situations outlined in the chart on the next page. Students will be afforded the opportunity to plan/prewrite, compose, and revise/edit their essay. However, the only writing that will be read and scored by two to three independent raters is the essay composed in the student's test booklet. The essays will be scored using New Jersey's state-developed Registered Holistic Scoring Method.

- The following table, "Schema of Discourse," presents the two models of discourse in relationship to the design of the HSPT writing component; that is, (1) the writer's relationship to audience and, (2) the writer's relationship to the writing task or functions of writing as they pertain to the writing situation/directions for that writer. The writing situations require students to write discourse that proposes a solution to a problem, speculates about causes or effects, or addresses a controversial issue. In each instance the writing situation establishes for the writer an audience relationship that moves from self as audience (introspection), to an immediate audience (interpersonal/school), and then to a mass audience removed in time and space (community/larger society).

(<u>Note</u>: The only writing that will be read and scored by two or three independent raters using the Registered Holistic Scoring Method is the essay composed by the student in his or her test booklet.)

Schema of Discourse
(Moffett, 1981; Britton, et al, 1975)

Progression of Writer - Audience Relationship and Functions of Writing

Discourse Development By Function
(Adapted from D'Angelo, 1975, 1980)

Audience Relationship	**Student written discourse that .....**		
Personal/ Interpersonal	**Proposes a Solution to a Problem**	**Speculates about Causes or Effects**	**Addresses a Controversial Issue**
Interpersonal/ Peers (School Life)	**Proposes a Solution to a Problem**	**Speculates about Causes or Effects**	**Addresses a Controversial Issue**
Community/ Larger Society	**Proposes a Solution to a Problem**	**Speculates about Causes or Effects**	**Addresses a Controversial Issue**

Function: The writer focuses on the subject matter (writing situation/directions) and provides information that advocates the position, conviction, or point of view he/she takes -- be it solution(s) to a stated problem; cause(s) or probable effect(s) to events, trends, or phenomena; or support or opposition to a controversial issue.

Development of the writing situation is adapted from D'Angelo's (1975) "topics of invention" or methods of development -- ways of thinking in order to address the given writing situation. On the eleventh-grade HSPT, the writer's mental processes are activated by the purpose and aims of the writing situation (e.g., "support or oppose the writing situation by taking a position on and advocating that position or point-of-view") and the writer's intention, that is, the response the writer expects to get from the reader or audience. The writing situation on this grade eleven HSPT activates student thinking -- "Why am I writing?" -- which in turn establishes the functions of writing. Students will respond to the given writing situation/directions (e.g., proposing a solution to a problem, addressing a controversial issue, or speculating about causes or effects of events/trends/phenomena) by taking a position, arriving at a solution, or speculating about likely causes or effects to advocate their respective point of view.

II. Cluster: Reconstructing Meaning By Revising And Editing The Written Text Of Another Writer

An indirect, multiple-choice approach to writing assessment has proven successful at testing students' knowledge of writing skills (the essay

assesses students' writing ability). However, the state-of-the-art assessment approach goes beyond multiple-choice questions based on sentences and short paragraphs; the questions are based on student essays, whole text.

The revising/editing response component would include several student sample formats based on actual student written language for assessing a range of student revising/editing skills. These skills would be assessed using multiple-choice items requiring students to identify and offer advice to another writer. The student sample formats would include weaknesses and errors that occur most commonly in student writing and that are commonly addressed by teachers of English. The student as a critical reader analyzes the written draft of the "other" student writer and through multiple-choice responses identifies what is or is not working.

The written drafts will be introduced to the student through directions that will describe a conference-like setting involving the student as a peer. Each student essay will be identified using a fictitious person's name. In addition, each described setting will highlight the role of the student as audience for another student's writing. The presentation will be a modified version of the procedures for self/peer conferencing introduced in the document Conferencing: Measuring Growth and Change In Students' Writing (Bloom, NJSDE, 1986). The student will be asked to read the written draft with a critical eye and consider not only the audience, purpose, and topic the "other" writer attended to while composing his/her written draft but, also, the other writer's ability to construct meaning (content), exhibit clarity of thought (organization), and demonstrate technical correctness.

Since students will be encouraged to read, revise, and edit the written text of another student, the written draft will be double-spaced so students may write on the draft in the test booklet. Student revision and editing marks in the test booklet will not be scored. What will be scored are students' multiple-choice responses. (The lines of text will be numbered to assist students.)

The written drafts will be related to adolescent issues and the age and ability levels of grade 11 students. The topics and purposes will include, but not be limited to: editorials; responses to literature; functional essays for a job, college, volunteer work; discourse for or against controversial issues, to name a few.

Specific examples of writing types are:

-- a social letter.

-- letter to newspaper editor or "personal columnist" such as Ann Landers or Abby.

-- letter of complaint about a product or situation typical of adolescent life.

-- letter requesting a job and/or giving resume, personal facts (not formal resume).

-- a company memo or short report about a transaction.

-- a brief science or social studies essay such as might be written on a test or for a report assignment.

-- a brief essay on a typical short story such as might be written on an English assignment after the story has been discussed.

NOTE: If letters are used, the revising and editing would be directed to the body of the letter, not the form.

In conclusion, students should be able to focus on another role of the writer, that is, the writer who reads, revises, and edits the written text of other writers. Students, in the role of audience, will determine whether the written text of another communicates a given message for a given purpose using standard written English. (Students have been encouraged to read, revise, and edit their own writing on the essay component of the HSPT).

The second cluster, **II. Cluster: Reconstructing Meaning By Revising/ Editing The Written Text Of Another Writer**, has six revising/editing skills. Each skill below will be assessed with multiple-choice questions based on sustained written text, a sample student essay; the questions will assess the most commonly occurring revising/editing errors in student writing. This cluster on the test would direct each student to demonstrate his or her knowledge of revising/editing skills by answering questions based on a sample student essay. The multiple-choice revising/editing skills are as follows.

A. Identify and correct common mechanical (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) errors and usage errors within a sentence.

B. Select a revision that corrects an error in sentence construction.

The student will be able to identify and correct:

- Incorrect and inconsistent verb usage;
- Sentence fragments and run-on sentences;
- Misplaced modifiers and modifying phrases;
- Incorrect use of parallel structure;
- Incorrect coordination and subordination of ideas;
- Incorrect use of standard written English; and
- Convoluted structure, wordy or imprecise language (nouns and verbs).

C. Select words, phrases, or clauses that logically complete a partially constructed sentence in written text.

D. Combine ideas into a well-constructed sentence.

The student will be able to:

- Combine items in a series.
- Construct compound or complex sentences using

  -- phrases within sentences or
  -- coordinating/subordinate clauses within sentences.

E. Select transition words to complete a logical progression of ideas in written text.

F. Organize the content of written text.

The student will be able to:

- Select the focus or controlling idea.
- Select the detail that supports the focus.
- Reorganize written text

  -- Sentence placement within a paragraph.
  -- Addition or insertion of a given paragraph.

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APPENDIX A

ELEVENTH-GRADE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST
DISTRIBUTION OF PROPOSED SKILLS
MARCH, 1989

Educators

New Jersey State Department of Education

* County Superintendents
* Division Heads
* RCSU Directors

Public School Districts (elementary and secondary)

* Chief School Administrators (285 districts responded)

HSPT Test Development Committees

- Ninth-grade HSPT committee members
- Eleventh-grade HSPT committee members

New Jersey Department of Higher Education

* Chancellor
* Basic Skills Assessment Program

Educational Associations

* New Jersey Association of School Administrators
** New Jersey Business Officials Association
** New Jersey Education Association
* New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
* New Jersey School Boards Association
* New Jersey State Federation of Teachers
* Newark Teachers Union

Content-Area Associations

* Art Educators of New Jersey
* Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey
* Educational Media Association of New Jersey
* Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey
* New Jersey Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development
* New Jersey Council for the Social Studies
* New Jersey Council of Teachers of English
** New Jersey Educators of the Gifted and Talented
* New Jersey Language Arts Leaders Association
* New Jersey Library Association
* New Jersey Reading Association
* New Jersey School Counselor Association

* New Jersey Science Supervisors Association
** New Jersey Science Teachers Association
* New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/ New Jersey Bilingual Educators
* Vocational Education Association of New Jersey

Business Associations

** Partnership for New Jersey
* Business and Industry Association
** New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

Parent and Student Associations

* New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers
* New Jersey Association of Student Councils

* organizations that responded to department survey

** organizations that reviewed materials and chose not to comment

\- copies distributed for information only; no responses requested

APPENDIX B

MEMBERS OF THE ELEVENTH-GRADE WRITING SKILLS COMMITTEE

Name	School District/Business
Mr. Howard Berridge (Chairperson)	West Windsor-Plainsboro Public Schools
Mr. Herbert A. Botbyl	Passaic County Regional H.S. District #1
Dr. Richard Buddemeier	Trenton Public Schools
Dr. Brenda Burrell	Glassboro State College
Dr. Mary Ellen Byrne	Ocean County College
Dr. Jerilyn Caprio	North Arlington Public Schools
Mrs. Elinor French	Middlesex County Vocational/Technical High School
Mrs. Mardi Gibbons	Pennsauken Township Public Schools
Miss Diane Fischer	Vineland Public Schools
Cpt. James L. Guerrieri	NJ State Department of Defense
Mr. Terrence Healey	Cinnaminson Public Schools
Ms. RoseAnn Morgan	Middlesex County College
Mr. Augustus Jones	Wilbur Watts Middle School
Dr. Carol M. Kramer (Recorder)	North Brunswick High School
Mr. Charles May	Hackettstown High School
Ms. Rae Phillips (Vice-Chairperson)	Madison High School
Ms. Helen E. Poole	Bernards Township Public Schools
Mrs. Gloria E. Ramos	Newark Public Schools
Mr. David Stakun	New Jersey Bell
Mr. Norman A. Steinthal	Atlantic City High School
Mrs. Katherine Trimarco	Newark Public Schools
Mrs. Grace Benson	NJ Congress of Parents and Teachers

Name	School District/Business
Ms. Alison Bell (Student)	Cherry Hill High School East
Dr. Charles Cooper (Consultant)	University of California-San Diego
Dr. Diane S. Bloom (Consultant/Liaison to the Committee; prepared the final report)	NJ State Department of Education

APPENDIX C

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